

Week Ending Friday, February 22, 2008

Remarks on Accepting the Grand Cross of the National Order of Benin in Cotonou, Benin

February 16, 2008

Mr. President, thank you. Laura and I are honored to be with you and the First Lady. I gratefully accept this on behalf of the American people. I stand here by your side as a friend, a believer in your vision, and a partner in your willingness to confront the disease and poverty and—that affect mankind.

We would not be standing here if you and your Government was not committed to your people. You mentioned some of the dollar—money we're spending with you, but those dollars come with great compassion from the American people. We care when we see suffering. We believe we're all children of God. And so it's a great honor to accept this award, and the American people send their blessings.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:28 a.m. at Cadjehoun International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to President Thomas Yayi Boni of Benin and his wife, Chantal de Souza Yayi.

The President's News Conference With President Thomas Yayi Boni of Benin in Cotonou

February 16, 2008

President Yayi. Ladies and gentlemen, journalists, on this day, Saturday, February 16, 2008, His Excellency, Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, and his wife, Laura Bush, have honored my Government and the Beninese people as a whole by deciding to conduct a working visit as part of his second trip to Africa. This visit is a followup to the meetings that I had at the White House on December 14, 2006, as part of my working trip to the United States.

Today President Bush and myself have had very fruitful exchanges during our bilateral meeting, as well as during an expanded working meeting with our staffs, in order to review the excellent relations of cooperation which unite the United States and my country, Benin. As you know, during his two terms in office, President Bush showed great concern for Africa, its well-being, and of the development of its people.

I should only mention as evidence the various initiatives on behalf of children, youth, and women, such as the initiative against malaria, the emergency plan against AIDS, the initiative for justice and empowerment of women. For all of these initiatives, Benin was selected by the Government of the United States. Likewise, my country is also benefiting from the President's Millennium Challenge Account initiative, as well as the AGOA, whose ultimate goal is to create the conditions favorable to economic growth on a sustainable manner in order to reduce poverty and build an emerging nation.

During our discussions, we talked about all of the issues of cooperation as well as other international topics, such as settlement of conflicts in Africa, Benin's participation in peacekeeping operations, as well as the reform of the United Nations system.

On behalf of the people of Benin, of my wife, and myself, I'd like to express most sincerely my friendship and all my gratitude to President Bush and to Mrs. Laura Bush for this stay filled with cordiality and conviviality. On behalf of the Beninese people, I would like to thank—wish you a good stay in Africa, Mr. President. Thank you very much.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you for your friendship; thank you for your vision. Madam, thank you for your warm hospitality. Laura and I are honored to be here.

You know, we've come to talk about our mutual interests, but we would not be talking about this mutual interests if, Mr. President,